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REMAKING KIDULTS’ IRRESPONSIBILITY: POSTMODERN VIEWPOINT

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**Abstract:** The paper contains the theoretical discussion on a new socio-psychological figure of postmodernity – kidult, – a contemporary “20-40-yeared child”, the representative of the middle and upper classes who acclaims youth values unconsciously denying own age and shows the lack of motivation in building of classic adulthood markers: independence, family and work. It is postulated that kidultism tend to become a normal and apprehensible practice of everyday life, and previous paradigms of adulthood and responsibility cannot be used to characterize today’s life-creational practices. The providing role of conventions as truly responsible psychological, social and cultural practices of postmodernity is promoted. As the overcoming of negative trends of kidultism spreading there the project proposal based on the networking community is presented. The project has its 13-steps scheme of realization and performs the principles of the systemic approach, the social constructivism, the psychological practices concept, the theory of group dynamics and the K. Rogers approach to the group meetings.

**Keywords:** adult, adulthood, baby-boomers, boomerang kids, Carlson syndrome, childhood, conventions, group dynamics, immaturity, infantilism, irresponsibility, kawaii, kidult, kidultism, life-creation, maturity, networking, Peter Pan syndrome, postmodernity, presentism, psychological practices, rejuvenation, responsibility, social constructivism, the Other, youthfulness.

**Inroduction.** Human society always wantedto find the key to the self-efficacy, self-realization and eventually happiness. And lots of times this search was made by analyzing life strategies of those who appeared as serious and successful people. But what if seriousness and success aren’t the reference point to the mature and self-realized personality anymore?

In the conditions of ongoing political, economic, demographic and socio-cultural transformations becoming an adult, mature person has new connotations. Postmodernity claims the social game in which personality loses the constancy of own identity, should always transform it and find ways of self-efficiency in flowing conditions of liquid modernity (Z. Bauman).

## Socio-psychological characteristics of “postmodern” individual, unlike “modern” individual, change in the direction of losing competitiveness and rationality. Admiring own scientific and technical achievements, “modern” person was focused on increasing cognitive abilities, was active, impatient and arrogant about own capabilities, tested own endurance and stimulated self-regulation. Thus the era of individualism has come, what led to expansion of alienation, indifference, focusing on quick profits and lack of understanding those activity consequences. However, these hardened characteristics tend to transform in postmodern reality, where individuals cease to put themselves in opposition to the world, and their identity becomes the result of their own life situation design.

## As far as identity is always striving for balanced coordination of social and personal aspects, in unstable conditions it reaches its crisis which is acute, limited in time, subjective experience of impossibility to implement life goals, objectives and plans [2]. Therefore, it is logical that the base of postmodern life is not the creation of individual identity, but avoiding fixation. Personality is transformed into motion, process, search, with no place for steadiness and sustainability (J. Holstein, [J. Gubrium](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref%3Ddp_byline_sr_book_2?ie=UTF8&text=Jaber+F.+Gubrium&search-alias=books&field-author=Jaber+F.+Gubrium&sort=relevancerank), T. Tytarenko). That’s why postmodern personality should continuously adapt to changes and seek ways of self-realization to overcome uncertainty.

## As a result, the response to this reality are escapism, infantilism and dependence that engendered such new social figure – “kidult”. Kidults, contemporary “20-40-yeared children”, are representatives of the middle and upper classes who acclaim youth values unconsciously denying their age and do not plan to have a family or to make any durable investments in constructioning of their own lives. So kidult appeared as a new psycho-social type.

## State-of-the-art in the field. The “kidult” subject is predominantly developed in Western European countries and the USA (J. Bernardini, A. Calcutt, J. Cоte, K. Crawford, F. Furedi). Variously, there is talk about the worrying rise of “adultescents” and “kidults” in the US and Australia, “Nesthocker” in Germany, “KIPPERS” (Kids In Parents’ Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings) in the UK, “mammone” in Italy, “boomerang kids” in Canada and “kawaii” in Japan.

## After the baby boom years, the birth rate in the Western world has progressively decreased and, as a consequence, the average age has risen strongly and alarmingly tend to grow. In 1950 those who were fourteen years old or less made up more than a third of the world's population, today these are just the 13.5% and in forty years it is estimated that they will be only 8.6%. In the United States the average age has switched from 25 years old in 1960 to 38 in 2012. Moreover, it is assumed that by the year 2050, in the United States, the number of people over seventy years old will be greater than that of teenagers. The European scenario reflects this trend in an even more obvious manner: in France the average age is 40 years old, in Spain and Bulgaria 42, in Italy and Germany 44. Young people are elsewhere: in the Second and Third World, but do not yet constitute a reachable target for postmodern transformations [1].

## In addition to demographic data the researchers postulate that the boundaries between age groups are also becoming less readable, both adults and children, and the elderly take on various forms of each other behavior.

## There are also can be the benefits for both – kidults and their parents. Kidults can live longer under parents’ protection and the parents can get more support from their grown up children, overcoming the absence or the shortage of psychological, social and/or economic resources. According to information on www.data.oecd.org, several countries noted the increasing number of young adults who return home after living outside the family: the part of those who returned to parental houses increased from 25% in 1950 to 46% in 2001. In European countries among people aged 18 to 34 years there are 48% of women and 36% of men living in the parental houses; in Japan there are 70% of single working women aged 30-35 years, who share the home with parents; in the United States there are 38% of young adults living with parents.

## So we can find youthfulness and childishness as the subject of adult behavior absence fetishization.

## Case analysis. Can such perspective of demographic aging through the prism of social rejuvenation processes lead to the psychological failure?

## *On the one hand*, as not caring in their early years about building a career, acquiring ownership and creating family kidults do not invest in developing of their psychological resources which are better self-consciousness and adequate self-esteem. Therefore they have a perspective to remain being dependent for their entire life [1].

## An important kidults problem is the lack of motivation in building of classic adulthood markers: independence, family and work [3]. Often there are kidults’ lack of motivation and procrastination tendencies to hinder plans achievement, and thus setting any tasks, both global and daily, is devalued and despised. Personal aims and intentions are not putting into practice what breaks kidults self-efficiency in traditional meaning.

## *But on the other hand*, kidultism tend to become a normal and apprehensible practice of postmodern everyday life, where the leisure and pleasure are perceived as keys to development and happiness. Staying young and childish becomes a strategy of coping with unstable social conditions and unclear future.

## Taking in account the historical-generational agenda, we can clearly define that the phenomenon of infantilization concerns almost exclusively people currently in their thirties and forties, those who once were labeled as baby boomers and who were characterized by the significant contrast of values and behaviors in comparison with their parents [1]. This generation has preferred to reject and deny the culture of older people to exalt the value that the life stage of youth was acquiring, rather than creating a new and better meaning of maturity. By refusing a culture based on authoritarianism, patriarchy and masculinity they were trying to become better partners and parents, but failed to propose an alternative model of maturity [1]. But this failure was only seen by the previous, so-called, great generations.

## On a psychological level, the standard model of adulthood provides for greater self-understanding and self-confidence, resulting from the accumulation of experiences and skills and by the consequent social validation [1]. The adulthood as a prototype of stability, experience and certainty has been preserved over time, but today this representation, from an idea, has been transformed into a hard-imagined ideal [4].

## In the classic paradigm responsibility, which used to be strongly correlated with the adultness, was the characteristic of personality’s social typicality [5]. The individual had to be accountable to lots of institutions and after that to be responsible for ownself, what was the mechanism of control transforming from external to internal. Autonomic responsibility was some kind of elevation over the life, ability to self-determination according to its holistic flow [5]. But postmodern understanding of the ongoing realities of life in discursive justification of variety of cultural worlds and types of goal-setting, has given a chance to the formation of a new culture of integrating of something another without subordination or assimilation [7]. It means that responsibility as personal experience should be embedded in the life context, but not to be something standing over the life and personality. The postmodern legitimization of the coexistence of different cultural logics, ways of understanding and implementation of the world also allowed to change the meaning of the “barbaric” child’s thinking regarding to adult rationality and responsibility from the marginal and peripheral pole to progressive one. This increase of social recognition of children’s world perception contributed substantial interpretation expansion of “childishness”, which ceased to be localized in only one age period and age group [7].

## The postponed adulthood practicing is appealing to the non-reproductivity. Reproductivity provides returnable solutions to typical everyday tasks, and choices of well-known, familiar, repeatedly traversed path. The person, whose reproductive practices prevail, is not even considering such features that require courage to take risks, to test something new [9]. But kidults are creative and live their lives ready for adventures. This way kidults overcome the power of traditions, where the maturity associated with the productivity, discipline and individual responsibility. Instead of any nostalgia for their young times they feel themselves very comfortable here and now, in the times of feminism, mass celebrity culture and contemporary consumerism [4].

## Really, calls for greater responsibility and commitment in the young seem particularly ironic at a time when most existing templates for maturity have already declared bankruptcy[4]. Kidults show the world that their life-creational practices are in continuum between the poles of quiet, habitual life, and stormy, unexpected, risky life [9].

There are some statements concerned kidults’ characteristics which are comfortably embedded into the concept of unstable postmodern times. Kidults can frequently react to their desires, what influenced by the *impetus* rather than by reason. Their sense of *dependency* prevails over the search for independence. As the contemporary time is inevitably marked by the dimensions of *doubt* and uncertainty, they are tend to ask *more questions* and show more *search activities*. Kidults also prefer *immediate gratification* instead of future benefits and choose *instantaneous pleasure* instead of long-term happiness. They put themselves and their very *own problems at the center of each experience*, disregard the presence and the interests of others and are often convinced that everything is allowed to them. They *claim their rights* instead of thinking about their obligations. Kidults are the ones who decide to go and live by their own, with their partner or with friends and then decide to *return to the* *family nest*; who prefer the temporariness of various cohabitations rather than the ostensible inalterability of marriage; they are also those ones one who *divorce and get married again*. Kidults are *presentists*: they focus their attention almost exclusively on the *day-to-day* dimension and are unable to make long-term projections, a conduct necessary to overcome the insecurity and anxiety related to the vision of the future. Their vision of life is *predominantly individualistic,* it seems hard to feel themselves as relatives, companions, lovers, citizens or members of a community – they don’t like the certain designations. On the contrary, kidults also *chase the standardized trends and desires of the youths*, suppress the variety, the singularity and the distinctiveness of their own persona in favor of an extraordinarily universal youth culture to enjoy the same identical products, tangible or intangible, regardless of age and nationality [1].

Objectively, kidults have all the advantages of adults but only few of their duties. And this is what “not accepting”-society can learn from them. These Carlsons and Peters Pans with their pulsatory, dynamic life-creational practices can be the key for overcoming cognitive conservatism and institutional inertia, for fighting the systems of tenure and promotion, bureaucracies and outdated class values.

Previous socio-psychological discourses were convincing human that one should perceive the reality as the doubtless objectivity, but postmodern discourse assures that we need to catch the conventional and simulative meanings of reality. [8]. In this worldview, only conventional commitments – the most normative forms of social and cultural practice – can be truly adult and responsible [4].

## The only possibility to overcome the negative trends which can face kidults with is the gradual spread of ideas about what is responsibility in contemporary life. The media could be a cornerstone in solving this problem, but marketing economics and exploitation of deficit needs do not allow to rely on the constructive personality potential. The promotion of the infantilization by the market has the aspiration to foster the regression of the desires of the consumer in order to make them more compatible with a capitalist logic based on surplus production and equality of the products. If the consumerism culture is leading there must come the counterculture which can be able to overcome consumptive mainstream, but remembering the values of postmodernism.

## Traditionally, discipline, diligence and severeness are associated with control instances concept, accounting of opportunities and measures to take responsibility. But, as mentioned above, postmodern responsibility is not a synonymous to the meaning of classical responsibility. Ethics and socio-psychological meaning of responsibility in the postmodern culture context fit into the concept of responsibility in the face of the Other [6]. Like this goal-setting linked to the development and consolidation of responsibility becomes addressed to the Other and shared with the Other, and the specific aims realization contributes to the coherent and understandable building of “I”-authorship to overcome an identity crisis. Postmodern responsibility is the ability to move towards the Other independently of positivity or negativity of his/her attitude to Me. A person with such responsibility does not oppose itself to the society and express itself within the existing social order and, moreover, interested in its support.

## Thus the idea of responsibility versus irresponsibility can be spreaded by means of reference groups. We can see the potential of transition to responsible personality functioning in the creation of communities where the sense of belonging to the network would be the main driver as continuous symbolic access to support resources.

## Connections, networking as the means of interaction and communication, and the method of social integration, and both the source of interest conflicts, have always existed. Being offline for postmodern mind would mean being out of society, out of civilized progress, out of culture magistrals, to add into your own life the chaos and uncertainty of the future.

## In postmodernity exactly the community decides the legitimacy and the validity of spreading thoughts, and postmodern instability may pacify exactly by means of community which opens to personality identity mirrors and capabilities to juggle them, receiving continual feedback.

## Those are networking and feedback to become basic principles of creating community. Since kidults usually live by depthless standards, hiding behind the facade of artificial sociality which are virtual reality and online social networks. In case of community work this virtuality should contrary reinforce the networking and become a tool for goals achieving. And each participant will receive real support to overcome existential estrangement, because those who avoid proximity require group work more than others (K. Rudestam).

## Although the incorporation of some of these postmodern features is already widely used in various communities (mainly with commercial interests), the applying of postmodern ideas in responsibility context has not yet been put into using of kidults’ practices. Thus, based on these features of today’s young adults, on postmodernity characteristics, on the approach to the irresponsibility regulation and on the author's vision of their practical realization, we can enable to achieve efficiency in socio-psychological work with kidults.

The global aim of a number of projects that could embrace the ideas of rethinking and reusing kidults’ irresponsibility is the prevention of the trend towards ageing of population due to a significant quantitative superiority of older generation over the young one (the rapid decline in the birthrate among the middle and upper classes in the developed countries). In addition, the kidults as those who make trends can provide a role model among other members of the society. There must be created conditions in which kidults would be able to achieve their immediate goals and find own strategies of dealing with the uncertainty as soon as possible in order to start a family and give birth to children. Thus, multiplying the number of representatives of the middle class as potentially wealthy individuals will take place through changes in personal intentions and by increasing the birth rate.

So the goal of the possible project is an evaluation of the effectiveness of the community in reducing the level of irresponsibility of kidults through networking, collaborative action and intensification of the local identity of the project participants.

The central hypothesis of the project might be that young people with distinctive features of kidult will demonstrate a higher level of personal responsibility and achievement of previously set goals after weekly group meetings during few months.

After conducting such research there will be a clear measure of the proposed community effectiveness, and such schemes of work will be possible for usage and distributing in a broader social context.

Specific aims can be the following:

- universalization of the diagnostics for the features of kidults;

- popularization of networking and coworking through the activities of the community;

- spreading of ideas about credibility of reaching personal goals;

- the transformation of kidults’ ideas about personal responsibility;

- fixing the kidults ability to set goals;

- implementation of the usage of contacts networks while the goals realization to the everyday practice of kidults;

- making kidults’ perception of their own achievements positive and increasing the level of their personal responsibility.

Using knowledge about postmodernity in the practice of social and psychological support and correction can provide new viewpoint in specific structure of community meetings and daily support of participants through the creation of a network of contacts. The group membership can be used as a facilitating factor in the achievement of specific goals by members and increase their personal responsibility.

Carrying out research within postnonclassical paradigm, we focus on the tools, instruments, quality materials, which lead to scientific interdisciplinarity and searches for pragmatic and social interactions. Methodologically, the project should use a systemic approach as a method to explain the interrelations and mutual influence of personality and society (L. von Bertalanffy, J. Habermas, N. Luhmann); social constructivism as a presumption of an idea that reality is constructed by people themselves (P. Berger, J. Bruner, T. Luckmann); the concept of psychological practices as a presentation of the variety of ways for personal construction and transformation of the world in terms of everyday life (T. Tytarenko, O. Kochubeynyk, K. Cheremnykh). Empirical implementation of the project must based on the theory of group dynamics by K. Lewin as the deployment of the collective processes in the group, and the concept of group meetings by K. Rogers as an instrument to facilitate trusting relationships between people.

## The scheme of the project realization might be the following:

1. Determination of the expressiveness level of the kidult’ features among respondents (diagnostic tool designing).

2. Determination of the ways to conduct diagnostics of responsibility level as a personality trait (selection of methods).

3. Specific participants selection (experimental and control groups formation).

4. Criteria elaboration for the future community evaluation (primary indicators fixation).

5. Participants practice of setting goals implementation (involvement of experimental group participants in community, control group instructing using S.M.A.R.T. technology).

6. Establishing the leader position in the community (hierarchisation, the beginning of community functioning).

7. Making group decisions, expanding community boundaries (control; establishing interpersonal contacts and trusting relations).

8. Community teambuilding, achieving the intermediate aims (conflict situations overcoming).

9. Overcoming the resistance to self-revelation, working on negative patterns of behaviour (roles changing and influence on the behaviour of community members).

10. Formation of needs to join, to express empathy and support (implementation of community values in the structure of personality).

11. Transformation of participants views on their own effectiveness (participants’ final goals achievement).

12. Contacts network resource implementation in the daily lives of participants (postponing of group dissolution).

13. Community effectiveness analysis (providing the second diagnostics in experimental and control groups, evaluation criteria applying).

**Conclusions.** Dealing with contemporary 20-40-yeared kidults is very urgent problem as they seem to spread the practices of irresponsibility which can lead to the lack of a role model for future generations, to the birth rate declining and to the depletion of social and natural resources. The base product as a result of the project on regulation of irresponsibility implementation should be kidults’ everyday practice of using self-development communities. Implementation of the project will open up perspectives for further research of the problem in the developed and developing countries, providing the opportunity for making comparisons and expanding range of regulation of kidults’ irresponsibility. Thus we can shift the discussion to a larger stage: from responsibilised individuals and communities towards corporative, collaborative and post-national forms of responsibility.

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РІМЕЙКІНГ БЕЗВІДПОВІДАЛЬНОСТІ КІДАЛТІВ:

ПОСТМОДЕРНИЙ ПОГЛЯД

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**Анотація.** У статті представлено теоретичну дискусію щодо нової соціально-психологічної постаті постмодерну – кідалта, – сучасної «20-40-річної дитини», представника середніх і вищих прошарків суспільства, який дотримується молодіжних цінностей, несвідомо заперечуючи власний вік, і демонструє нестачу мотивації у досягненні класичних показників дорослості: незалежності, сімейності та кар’єри. Постульовано, що кідалтизм стає нормальною і зрозумілю повсякденною практикою, і попередні парадигми дорослості не можуть бути використаними для характеристики сучасних практик життєконструювання. Просувається ідея про те, що провідну роль слід надавати конвенціям як істинно відповідальним психологічним, соціальним і культурним практикам постмодерну. В якості інструмента подолання негативних трендів розповсюдження кідалтизму представлено проектну пропозицію, засновану на створенні нетворкінг-спільноти. Проект містить 13-крокову схему реалізації і наслідує принципи системного підходу, соціального конструктивізму, концепта психологічних практик, теорії групової динаміки і підходу К. Роджерса до групових зустрічей.

**Ключові слова:** бебі-бумери, безвідповідальність, відповідальність, групова динаміка, дитинство, діти-бумеранги, дорослий, дорослість, життєконструювання, зрілість, інфантилізм, Інший, кідалт, кідалтизм, конвенції, молодість, незрілість, нетворкінг, омолодження, постмодерн, презентизм, психологічні практики, синдром Карлсона, синдром Пітера Пена, соціальний конструктивізм.

РИМЕЙКИНГ БЕЗОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТИ КИДАЛТОВ: ПОСТМОДЕРНИСТСКИЙ ВЗГЛЯД

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**Аннотация.** В статье представлена теоретическая дискуссия о новой социально-психологической фигуре постмодернизма – кидалта, – современного «20-40-летнего ребенка», представителя средних и высших слоев общества, который придерживается молодежных ценностей, неосознанно отрицая собственный возраст, и демонстрирует недостаток мотивации в достижении классических показателей взрослости: независимости, семейности и карьеры. Постулировано, что кидалтизм становится нормальной и понятной повседневной практикой, и предыдущие парадигмы взрослости не могут быть использованы для характеристики современных практик жизнеконструирования. Продвигается идея о том, что ведущую роль следует отводить конвенциям как истинно ответственным психологическим, социальным и культурным практикам постмодернизма. В качестве инструмента преодоления негативных трендов распространения кидалтизма представлено проектное предложение, основанное на создании нетворкинг-сообщества. Проект содержит 13-шаговую схему реализации и следует принципам системного подхода, социального конструктивизма, концепта психологических практик, теории групповой динамики и подхода К. Роджерса к групповым встречам.

**Ключевые слова:** безответственность, бэби-бумеры, взрослость, врослый, групповая динамика, дети-бумеранги, детство, Другой, жизнеконструирование, зрелость, инфантилизм, кидалт, кидалтизм, конвенции, молодость, незрелость, нетворкинг, омоложение, ответственность, постмодернизм, презентизм, психологические практики, синдром Карлсона, синдром Питера Пэна, социальный конструктивизм.